

Committee on Ways and Means

Social Security Benefit Enhancements for Women Act of 2002 H.R. 4069

Social Security is particularly important to women's retirement security.

- Women live longer, earn less, take time away from the workforce to care for their children, and have less pension and asset income than men.
- 57% of adult Social Security beneficiaries are women.
- Without Social Security, more than half of elderly women would live in poverty.
- In 1999, the average income from an annuity or employer pension plan for women age 65 or older was \$8,224, compared with \$14,046 for men.

H.R. 4069 will help over 120,000 elderly and disabled widows and divorced spouses because it:

- Increases the benefit limit on widows whose spouses retire and die before the full retirement age.
- Updates eligibility requirements for disabled widows to ensure consistency with earnings required today.
- Eliminates a needless two-year benefit wait for some divorced spouses whose spouses have remarried.

The Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds' long-term financing is not affected.

- Both the Social Security and Medicare actuaries have confirmed that these important benefit updates do not impact the ability to pay benefits over the long-term.

These benefit enhancements have bipartisan support.

- The Chairman and the Ranking Democrat of the Subcommittee have sponsored the bill.
- AARP, United Seniors, Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement, and Women Impacting Public Policy have sent letters of support. Many other organizations have said these changes are important first steps toward improving benefits for women.

Bipartisan agreement on benefit enhancements for women is the first step toward a bipartisan dialogue on strengthening Social Security for all Americans.

- One of the most important ways to ensure women's retirement security is to work together to put Social Security on sustainable financial footing for the future.
- Bipartisan cooperation on these modest, yet meaningful improvements will lead toward a constructive dialogue on how best to strengthen Social Security.
- We must strengthen Social Security benefits for women, however tax increases to fund additional benefits is not the answer. In December, Republicans and Democrats voted 415-5 to save Social Security without benefit cuts or tax increases, and we need to stick to that promise.